

ENQUIRY

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In this issue:

ON REDEFINING SOCIALISM

Philip Selznick

PACIFISM AND REVOLUTION

Henry Ozanne

A DECENTRALIST STRATEGY

Marge Ratner

"THE MACHIAVELLIANS"

William Ferry

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ON REDEFINING SOCIALISM

By Philip Selznick

The wave of self-analysis and reappraisal which has been sweeping the socialist movement has had to do above all with a closer specification of goals and means consistent with the fullest possible attainment of democratic objectives. For the most part, the results of this scrutiny have led to an increasing skepticism of the viability of the most far-reaching socialist goals, such as the total elimination of economic want and of class struggle. There has been a rising emphasis on the need to be clear about the limits which must be placed on the potentialities of social action, on the need to articulate the stated goals of any socialist movement with what can reasonably be expected to be accomplished, given the limitations of the human and social materials on which the transformation of society must rely. There is much that is dangerous in such an orientation: For many, it has meant a tendency to be satisfied with the protection of existing democratic institutions, and to feel that all struggle for broader social goals must be ruled out in practice. Such a viewpoint, unmindful of the speed with which existing conditions are driving headlong toward totalitarianism, can provide no answer to the basic questions of social crisis—war, fascism, and unemployment. And so long as these problems remain unmet by an adequate program of alternatives to the capitalist status quo, there can be little hope for avoiding the totalitarian fruits of the unresolved crisis. We cannot be content with concern for the procedures of democracy; we have got to maintain a program of economic reorganization, which is to say, we have got to remain democratic *socialists*.

Nevertheless, with all its dangers, the orientation toward the *limitation* of goals is a healthy one. For to my mind, the basic problem of socialist reorientation is that of *taking into account* the facts of social life. I think it is possible to speak with a fair degree of confidence about *the inability of masses to control the*

tools of organized action, the consequent tendency in all organizations toward the development of bureaucratic classes, the persistent fact of rule by minorities, and the struggle of minorities for control of the mass. An awareness of the *relatively permanent and universal* character of these social laws is implicit in the viewpoints of all those who recognize the fact that it no longer makes sense to leave to the days which follow a socialist revolution the question of how to insure (insofar as that is possible in politics) the co-existence of a socialized economy and political freedom.

But there are some socialists, stemming from the Marxian intellectual tradition, though aware of the problems at stake, who have not been able to grasp the full implications of these ideas. Whatever may be the possibilities of hedging the doctrine of historical materialism on a theoretical level, it would seem that in practice it is necessary to definitely and positively reject the notion that the character of the political superstructure must be rooted in the economic foundations of society. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that until we have plainly stated that there are some very important characteristics of political life which *are independent* of the way in which men make their living or of the productive relations, our minds will continue to be subservient to that powerful principle of Marxist *Weltgeschichte*. I have known many who have been willing to so qualify the Marxist formulations that, in the end, there was nothing with which I as a non-Marxist socialist could disagree. But experience indicates that psychologically (which is what counts when we are interested in the role of ideas as they shape the focus of attention), that kind of sophistication has acted as the merest window-dressing, affecting only incidentally the individual's interpretation of history. So long as disagreements with Marxism remain academic, merely on the level of formulation, it is possible to brush them aside as of no particular importance. But as we come across events which do not fit into the Marxist scheme, and cannot be correctly interpreted when a man's focus of attention is limited because he is wearing Marxist blinders, then it becomes necessary to abandon intellectual compromises. It is regrettable but true that the problem of bureaucracy, and an understanding of its general nature and profound implications for the limitations of human effort, is one set of notions over which Marxists of every stripe and political allegiance (Social Democrat, Communist, Trotskyist) seem inevitably to stumble and fall. The most reasonable explanation of this phenomenon would seem to be the fact that the doctrine of historical materialism, as it works in practice and whatever the personal qualifications made by particular individuals, forces its adherents to deny the existence of general laws of political life which transcend any given social

system. But it is precisely this which must be understood if any realistic approach to the redefinition of socialism is to be taken.

Some socialists, faced with a painful dilemma, have taken a curious way out. Unwilling to accept the tendency toward bureaucratism and the limitations of self-government as a general law to which definite political procedures and principles must be counterposed, and at the same time aware of the fact and problem of bureaucratization, they have fled to the refuge of, on the one hand, very vague and pious hopes which cannot in the nature of things provide acceptable answers, and on the other of purely speculative proposals (having no basis in what we currently know) for *more* self-government through workers' councils and similar mechanisms. The most general notion of the former sort is the idea that we must rely on the "spontaneity of the masses". But it is part of the theory of bureaucratic development that the spontaneity of the masses cannot be *relied upon* to maintain democracy. That has got to be thoroughly understood, or in practice we shall find ourselves hoping against hope that the good will of the leaders will prevail, for we shall have nothing definite to counterpose to the policies of the leadership when it is faced with the practical necessity of organizing economic and social life. This does not mean that spontaneity should not be encouraged, and everything possible done to make it far more widespread and far more readily possible than it is today. But we must have some notion of what we can expect and what we can *rely upon* for the maintenance of liberty, if we are thinking in terms of a socialist revolution within the lifetime of the youth among us. It makes no sense to simply hope that "consciousness can be developed sufficiently that the workers will be able to control production". Such a hope will leave us helpless and unprepared when we are faced with the *fact* that the workers are unable to organize production. If we understand what role the workers *can* play in production, then we can preserve that role because the facts of economic life will permit us to do so. If we are unprepared for these limitations then we will be unable to stem the tide of those who will want to go to the other extreme and abrogate those democratic procedures which are actually possible.

It is enormously instructive in this connection to consider what happened to the Leninist ideas in the course of the assumption by the Bolsheviks of the responsibility for organizing Russian economy. When, on the eve of October, Lenin wrote his pamphlet *The State and Revolution*, he spoke in thoroughly naive terms about the role of the masses in the socialist state (terms which are more or less repeated by Luxemburgist Marxists today), but

when he was faced with the gargantuan task of actually getting society to run, he had to abandon those notions. I do not think he was corrupted by power, or insincere about what he wrote, but I do think that the concepts he used turned out to be completely useless for the task at hand, they were not helpful, and they had to be discarded. Ideologically and organizationally unprepared for this collapse of his democratic hopes, overcome by the urgency of the immediate tasks, Lenin moved to the opposite extreme, calling for the open dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party. Whether or not it would have decided the ultimate outcome, it seems to me that it would have been of great value if the Bolshevik Party had had a clearer vision of the actual forces on which it would have to rely, and if it had prepared in advance solutions which would actually have been helpful in the task of economic reorganization. We now know, for example, that the role of the trades unions must be that of protecting the workers and not of assuming responsibility for production.

I think it is time that we also understood *why* the role of the movement for workers' control was purely revolutionary, and had little to do with actually giving the workers primary control over the productive process.* The workers *could* perform the the revolutionary task of overturning capitalist power within the factories and of providing the main base for the maintenance of socialist power, but they *could not* act as surrogates for a proper system of administrative and managerial responsibility. There is a reasonable amount of evidence for the hypothesis that *in the first stages* of social overturn the workers can and do exercise dominant control over the productive process in the particular factories in which they happen to work. This is conceivably only a special case of an even more general social law stating that the molecular group constituents of society will always intervene directly to reconstitute an economic structure in the face of chaos. But what is important in a highly integrated industrial society is the fact that mobilization of that industrial structure *demands* the construction of an administrative hierarchy with the delegation of clearly fixed responsibilities and centralized authority. In the interests of the economy as a whole the workers are called upon to relinquish their dominant control over the economic machine and turn it over to the new managerial group set up by the central regime. In a discussion of the Spanish experience, a Trotskyist writer states: "On their own hook, the third and fourth string leaders of the Anarchist Trade Unions (CNT) and the Socialist unions (UGT) went ahead to

* A good discussion of the Russian experience with workers' control may be found in Maurice Dobb's *Russian Econ. Develop. Since the Revolution*, George Routledge & Sons, London, 1928.

organize militias and confiscate factories. *But the moment soon arrived when centralized, coordinated leadership—in the true sense—was needed*".* What else would this new policy mean, how else could it be carried out, but by the construction of a new administrative apparatus with responsibility for production and, to avoid chaos, invested with authority commensurate with that responsibility? The Popular Front government did organize the economy, in its own way, but common to its program and that of the Leninists, was the need for a large measure of centralized control. The fact of civil war underlined this necessity, but there is every reason to believe that a relatively peaceful transition would have had to bend to the same requirements.

If these are indeed the facts, then it would seem far more in keeping with the spirit of democracy to explicitly recognize them, and to work out democratic controls within the framework presented by these facts, than to hold out gaudy hopes either to ourselves or to the workers which will have to be rescinded when living reality presents its cruel and limited alternatives. The workers must be told plainly that direct control of the factories is only the first (not the last) step in the process of socializing industry. We must strive, of course, to raise the educational level of the workers to new heights, to help them to achieve a far better understanding of their own industry and the economic system generally, but we must understand that in the first generation or two of socialist power—which is all we can talk about intelligently—there can be no question of direct workers' control over the typical economic structures in an industrial civilization. This does not mean that the workers will not have a far greater measure of control over industry than they do today; but it will remain indirect, and will operate thru (1) the far more representative character of the government itself; (2) the recruitment of corporate directorates and administrative personnel from the working class movement, which must be the main base of a socialist government; (3) the existence of powerful independent trades unions, not responsible for, and therefore able to put pressure on, the productive system. These are more limited goals than the idea of direct workers control over industry, but it is important to remember that if we expect too much, if our goals are not tied to the actual alternatives before us, decisions will be made under the pressure of immediate urgencies, and we shall wind up with tyranny.

An approach which takes into account the limitations on what we can accomplish, must lead to a more limited concept of socialism

* Miriam Gould, "Lessons of the Spanish Commune," New International, May, 1943, p. 137.

than has been current in Marxist circles. If we spell out its nature more closely, then we shall be able to specify some of the controls which will be available. If we think of socialism in broad terms such as the elimination of economic conflict in *general*, rather than of specific conflicts which lie at the roots of current crises, then we shall not only be asking for pie in the sky, but we shall have removed the notion of socialism from the arena of intellectual responsibility, which is to say, we shall not be able to subject it to the control of measurement against specific achievements; the more so, since there is no operational criterion of democracy which does not include the actual existence of group conflict.

There are three major points which can serve as a rough definition of socialism: 1) A shift in social power (which can only come in a revolutionary way and not piecemeal) from the banker-oligopolist class which controls the major sector of industry to the organizations of the working class, which form the primary social base for a socialist government; 2) The mobilization by the state of the key sector of our economy (heavy and mass-production industry) for production for use-in-consumption by the people; 3) The maintenance of an equitable distribution of income for the provision of continuous mass purchasing power. This is what is essential for the elimination of the basic evils of monopoly capitalism—war and unemployment and the promise of fascism—and for establishing the foundations for the unprecedented development of a welfare economy.

The achievement of such a program requires a social revolution; its operation will require the continued existence of a state apparatus. There will be strong tendencies toward the crystallization of a new class structure, but the maintenance of organizations which can carry on a struggle from below should make possible the preservation of fluidity in class relations. It will be noted that this program does not specify the abolition of private property in the means of production *as such*, though of course it is severely limited. It is assumed that a mixed economy, including a sector of privately operated small industry which performs a social function, and a sector of private property in agriculture, will continue to exist. This has the value of providing 1) automatic decentralization of a part of the productive system with its consequent limitation on the size of the state bureaucracy; 2) more efficient production of a large number of products under the pressure of competition; 3) a valuable counterbalance, based on the ever-reliable factor of economic interest, to the concentration of all economic power in the hands of that large-scale integrated apparatus—whether or not it is called the state—which runs the dominant sector of the economy; 4) a means

of leaving the economy "open" in the sense of providing an area within which men may make a living without receiving prior approval from the state. (This is of course a *marginal* safeguard, since it would be necessary for the mass of men to rely on the constitutional guarantee that every man has a right to a job.) Such an economy would be far from a millenium, but I believe it *can be achieved*, and that it would be able to solve the basic problems which create and perpetuate the social crisis today.

The mythology of socialism, striving beyond the justification of its program in terms of practical answers to the agony of war and insecurity, has tended to overemphasize the qualitative cleavage between society as we know it under monopoly capitalism, and the order that would be ushered in by a socialist regime. It goes without saying that the relative abolition of poverty and imperialist war would lighten immeasurably the burdens of the commonday-lives of the mass of men; but it is a far cry from that to the emphasis that we are to have an utterly new "socialist" culture. This is not only inaccurate, but dangerous as well: 1) The dangers and evils inherent in organized action will undoubtedly continue for a very long period, and this means that the rights and the techniques of opposition must be secured. It is all too easy to maintain, as did many of the Bolsheviks, that what was necessary under capitalism is "obviously" unnecessary and counterrevolutionary under socialist power. 2) It is false to identify our *culture*, in the sense of the complex of ways of life which constitute it, with *capitalism*. We are not, by and large, a profit-making people, and it is probable that the cultural values of the mass of American wage-earners will remain essentially as they are. In any case, they will certainly "work for wages". The possibility (even were it desirable) of creating a "cooperative man" is highly doubtful: most of us will still participate competitively in the struggle for prestige, power, and as large a share as we can get of the spoils of life. 4) It is also important that, in a significant sense, the key sector of our economy is already "socialized". The great corporate structures are not significantly analogous to enterprises dependent upon individual initiative, for their sociologically corporative existence is already well established—which is evident in the fact that they can pretty well run themselves. *Structurally*, the socialized sector of a socialist economy is not likely to look very different from the existing monopolistic sector, though of course a new personnel with a new policy will run it.

The basic structural change in society brought in by socialism will have to do primarily with *the relations between classes*. It is absolutely essential that the preponderant power of the capitalist class be broken, and this criterion must be brought into play in all considerations of economic reorganization. (This does not

require, however, the essentially totalitarian conception that *implicit* and *potential* threats to socialist power must be liquidated forthwith.) It will be readily apparent that the social revolution required to dislodge monopoly capitalism will bring tremendous changes to society, but if socialism is to be in any sense a scientific concept, it must be sharply divorced from all such mythical notions as "the abolition of wage labor". Many of us will undoubtedly favor the shaping of new cultural values, such as that of non-violence in social action, but it must be remembered that the socialist program is, in no minor sense, precisely a program for the *defense* of many of our present cultural values against forces which threaten their destruction.

The redefinition of socialism must base itself solidly upon the explicit recognition and understanding of this fundamental principle of social life: *only power can check power, and the existence of opposing social forces is a necessary condition for the existence of democracy*. This means, of course, that the idea of self-government must be clearly delineated in terms of that principle, if it is to have any meaning at all. Only when opposition and minority groups, dependent on the mass and championing its cause, can freely exist, do the masses effectively govern themselves, but they certainly have an influence on the progressive realization of democratic goals, as in the case of the elimination of chattel slavery. This is not all there is to the democratic process, but this principle is a powerful analytical tool for testing its existence and appraising its vitality. In our time, moreover, it is of far greater significance than the fact of balloting and the formal election of representatives. The efficacy of the principle that only power checks power, and only power can be relied upon to maintain liberty, is evident in the experience of all groups organized formally or informally for social action. Even in small groups, individuals and sub-groups find that, whatever the good-will of the leadership, the exigencies of organization make it impossible to rely on that good-will: they must build their own strength independently of the leadership so that their effective participation in organizational decision will become itself an exigency of organization which the leadership *must* take into account. There is always the ultimate possibility of withdrawal and the threat of withdrawal, which can provide some check on the leadership, but in practice this is usually ineffective, the more so as membership in the group increases in importance to the life of the individual or sub-group. This process is *general*, and holds as well for a trade-union or national state. This means that we must be for the freedom of factional organization in our socialist party and in the unions; we must be for the existence of pressure groups in a socialist regime, and repudiate entirely

the idea that "lobbying will not be necessary under a Workers' Government." (Albert Parker in *The Militant*.) We shall also support, on the basis of the same principle, the existence of diverse economic groups, with conflict on the basis of class interest.

There is little in the foregoing analysis which requires any serious modification of revolutionary strategy as we have known it up to now. The needs of the revolution have always required a democratic struggle against capitalism and the capitalist state; we must recognize now that many of the principles upon which that struggle has been based must not be relinquished in our consideration of socialism itself.

PACIFISM AND REVOLUTION

By Henry Ozanne

The nature of the interdependence of pacifism and revolution has been explored in recent issues of *Enquiry*.¹ The question posed by Sibley is central to a theory of revolution. In this article I accept Sibley's proposition of the mutual implication of non-violence and revolution, but I invert his means-end sequence. Where he argues that revolution is an end-product of pacifist action, I hold that pacifism has no meaning for radicalism except in the pre-existing context of revolutionary action. Sibley's sequence is: pacifism-into-revolution. Mine is: revolution-into-pacifism.

I discuss the issue under two aspects: 1. What is the evidential support of my view of the revolution-pacifism pattern as against Sibley's? 2. What is the place of pacifism in the process of revolution?

1. The evidence here offered I draw from two different levels of argument: (A) Religious pacifism that is non-socialist; (B) Certain types of socialist pacifism that are non-religious.

A. *Religious Pacifism*. The War Resisters League, despite its formal secularism, embraces the largest number of religious pacifists in any one exclusively anti-war organization in the United States. The League announced its membership as 11,297 on April 15, 1943, and it is estimated that at least 80 percent of that membership is enrolled as religious pacifists. Religious pacifism, then, is the main ground for pacifist action today.

¹ Mulford Sibley: *Radicals and the Pacifist Ethic*, *Enquiry*, March, 1943; *The Problem of Means: Pacifist Notes*, *Enquiry*, May, 1943.

The anomalies of this fact often have been cited. Organized religion always has been the relentless antagonist of the religious pacifist. A survey² shows that during the First World War the church was the chief opponent of the conscientious objector; the press next, then government administrative bureaus and courts, and finally the military. The same situation is duplicated in the present war. Episcopalian bishops (Manning) and Catholic archbishops (Spellman) take war consultative posts, and the Rabbinical Association exempts Jews from their traditional holy day observance in the name of war values. There is nothing new about this; in all wars—as now—the church as an institution is thoroughly oriented to the war culture and to the principle of violence.

Nor is this a modern betrayal of some former pristine peace principles. War and religion always are intimately linked. The Vedas are a martial literature. Brahmanism gives consecration to the military caste. And Christianity's tenet of non-violence, a contribution from its Eastern heritage, was one of the contradictions between Roman and Oriental philosophy which was reconciled in Patristic literature. And while there is reason to regard the church of the first two centuries as pacifist, even then there were in its elements of support for both war and violence. As the writings of Clement show, the church never unqualifiedly condemned war. Tertullian says that many Christians were in the Roman army of their own choice and that the church did not disapprove. Diocletian found so many Christians in the army that he deemed them a danger to the state. Augustine himself was the first to rationalize the distinction between the "good" and the "bad" war, thereby laying the ethical basis for militarism that persists to this day. Ambrose lauded warlike courage, and Aquinas argued that the biblical prohibition against taking the sword applied only to unauthorized persons taking it. Luther paid homage to the "Christian soldier", and Calvin contended that war is a branch of retributive justice. After Constantine and the integration of church and state Christianity's anti-war precepts disappeared never to reappear except in recurring minor sects, the Albigenses, Waldenses, Lollards, Hussites, Moravians, Mennonites, Quakers, and a score of others.

The justification which the church gives to war and violence is expressed thus by one of its spokesmen:³ "The ultra-pacifist interpretation of Christian duty, while plausible, really rests on a superficial view of the ethical system of Christianity.... It may be maintained with a good conscience that Christianity makes room for warfare in cooperation with God in a world which teems with violence and injustice...."

And here it is well to add the anti-revolutionary meaning of this maxim as voiced by the same author:

"The debt which a man owes to the state is even greater than that which he owes to his parents, and the desertion of parents in sickness or in old age is not more discreditable than the refusal by a citizen of such service as it is in his power to render to his fatherland in its time of distress or peril."

All this is not to judge the personal ethics of any religious pacifist, but simply to show that religion as such—in the name of which are found the greatest number of pacifists—is inadequate theoretical ground for either non-violence or revolution.

Religious pacifism never comes to grips with the real problem of war. It accepts the term "pacifism" but fails to inform the concept with a theory of social action. War and peace in the modern world have no meaning

² Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Article, *Conscientious Objector*.

³ W. D. Paterson: *War*, in the Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.

except in a socio-economic-political context, but to such a sociology of war religious pacifism makes no contribution. As a result its historical dilemmas are many, such as the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. And in the American Civil War Quakers opposed the abolition of slavery because of the use of arms involved. The moral is clear: where conscience fails to work through its materials in a social manner it abrogates the very ethic which it proclaims.

In this sense A. J. Muste is one of the naive religious pacifists. He cites⁴ the "tendency to set man at the center of the universe... a tendency to conceive man as really the highest form of moral being..." as the crucial cause of war! Rather, can we say that it is precisely the failure to so evaluate man that makes war possible. Muste's crudity of social theory is expressed in these words: "...only the Christianity of Jesus, only religious pacifism can build a movement which goes to the roots of evil in man and society..."

Norman Angell among others has argued that the religious pacifist really is an agent for war in that his opposition to significant levels of anti-war action (we term it revolution) preserves the system from which war springs and which makes war possible. The characteristic bankruptcy of religious pacifism is well expressed in the statement which one religious pacifist made to the court which sentenced him for draft evasion: "I ask no one to stop fighting as long as he conscientiously believes that is the correct way."⁶ Such disavowals of the revolutionary implications of their own actions are made repeatedly by religious pacifists, and many have even emphasized that their sole concern is their own unwillingness to participate personally in war. The religious pacifist quoted above completes the confusion of the democratic ethic and a capitalist-imperialist state allegiance in his political rationalization of "majority rights" by which he condones the war and the violence which he purports to oppose. Such argument that war is a majority wish of the people accepts the mythology of war and its symbolism at face value, ignoring the fact that war always is a minority vested interest rationalized in the myth of the masses, and that popular expressions of war support are engineered by the psychological techniques of domination and exploitation canalized from the ruling power of the state to its mass bases.

I make these extended remarks on religious pacifism because religious pacifists are the most extensive and articulate group of pacifists today, and declaredly have conceptualized their position in theoretical terms, and because religious pacifism is the only type of pacifism recognized under the Selective Service Law, and hence is the only legal pacifism in this war period. The corollary of this for revolutionary action is apparent immediately.

B. *Socialist Pacifism.* Under this heading I analyze a particular implication of non-religious socialist pacifism. The view examined here is not representative of the whole area of socialist thought. In fact, it is not possible to index all types of socialist pacifism, for unlike religious pacifism, socialist pacifism has no over-simplified, monistic theory. Yet while socialist pacifism operates on a higher level of sophistication than does religious pacifism, socialist pacifism, too, often manifests anti-revolutionary strains.

A meeting was held in New York City May 5, 1942, sponsored by Peace House and the War Resisters League, and attended by 500 persons. This was a secular, public meeting at which the following resolution was adopted:

⁴ *The World Task of Pacifism* (pamphlet)

⁶ Arnold C. Satterthwait, in U. S. District Court, Philadelphia, Nov. 26, 1941.

"We urge upon our representatives in Washington the immediate setting up of a CONGRESSIONAL PEACE AIMS COMMISSION [capitals in the original] for the speedy formulation of and publicizing to all nations, Allied, neutral and belligerent alike the peace aims upon which our country would be willing to conclude the present intolerable conflict..."

Here is not only forgotten the fundamental principle of revolution, that the existing capitalist-imperialist state cannot either create a peace or maintain it, but appeal is made to the war-state itself and the identification of the people with that state is explicit.

The same anti-revolutionary departure is taken by George Hartmann in his anti-war booklet *A Plea for an Immediate Peace by Negotiation*. The position of Hartmann is much more significant because of his organizational affiliations. He is a prominent member of the Socialist Party, a member of the board of directors of *The Conscientious Objector*, and is on the executive committee of the War Resisters League. Hartmann makes a lengthy and acceptable indictment of war and shows that this war conforms to the pattern of all war. He then elaborates an "eight-fold magna carta for all humanity," which embodies a sound socialist and revolutionary program with view. But at the end he overthrows his entire revolutionary program with these words:

"I urge Messrs. Roosevelt and Churchill and their colleagues and successors to adopt this World Charter as a means of fusing their war and peace aims into a set of social aims for all mankind."

In a postscript to the second edition Hartmann reaffirms his belief in a "negotiated peace". For a theory of revolution, that, of course, misses the whole point. No peace except a negotiated peace has any meaning, but the critical question is Who negotiates that peace, what is it, and for whom? Again we insist on the primer of revolution: no existing capitalist-imperialist state is able to negotiate the peace. Hence Hartmann's appeal to Roosevelt and Churchill by name and to their "colleagues and successors" again exemplifies the inability of an anti-war philosophy *per se* and alone to equate pacifist and revolutionary action.

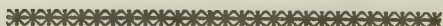
A more flagrant instance of the same fallacy is found in the leaflet *A Week-End for Peace*, written by Jessie Wallace Hughan, secretary of the War Resisters League, and distributed by the League May 2, 1943. Despite its innocuous title this pamphlet circulated in the name of pacifism, is one of the most anti-revolutionary toward the war and the state that has yet appeared. It documents with six arguments its thesis "that the time for peace negotiation is now ripe." The first of these arguments is in these words:

"...the military fortunes of the United Nations are now in the ascendant. Enemy advances have been checked in Russia, in Africa, and in the Pacific; the air offensive has shifted (we say it with shame) from their side to ours; and our own overwhelming material resources are apparently tipping the scale. We may now offer peace with conventional honor unimpaired."

Seldom has pacifist argument become so debased that it ties itself not only to military operations, but to military "victory"! Here again is the repudiation of basic socialist and revolutionary principles, and that repudiation is made in the name of pacifism. It is noteworthy to recall that the author, Jessie Wallace Hughan, has had a long record in peace and socialist work and was the organizer of the first group in this country to enroll individuals against war support, the Anti-Enlistment League, formed in 1915.

2. From this evidence it is clear that pacifism, whatever its ground, is not a sufficient condition for revolution; is not, in fact, a guarantee of revolution at all. There is no one-directional causal sequence between them. Not the mere fact of pacifism, but the reason for pacifism is the meaningful consideration for a sound radicalism. Sibley's sequence fails to provide the means by which revolutionary action is assured. In the process of social revolution pacifism is not a means to an end as conceived by Sibley—a wrench to be applied to the machinery of the state—but rather it is an index of the stage of development of revolutionary, democratic society. Sibley sees this partly—he recognizes the reactionary character of violence, but he does not draw the full interpretation: that this violence is reactionary precisely because it is a hallmark of the capitalist-imperialist state. It is a historical stigma and logical necessity of that state. Hence non-violence is not something to be achieved by “renunciation” (Sibley's term) but must be achieved as a revolutionary product. Sibley has become lured from the revolutionary focus into an inept logic. One might as well speak of “renouncing” imperialism, or the profit system. Revolutions are not made from resolutions. In this mistaking of the index of revolution for its means, Sibley's diagnosis is equivalent to ice-bagging the fever but leaving the infection untouched.

I said at the beginning that I accept the mutual implications of non-violence and revolution. There Sibley and I are agreed, but we differ in the interpretation of the logical pattern of that relationship. Sibley's causal sequence is standing on its head. It must be inverted. That is equivalent to saying that when we are prepared to embrace revolution, then through revolution non-violence will be its achievement.



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A DECENTRALIST STRATEGY

By Marge Ratner

There is one striking omission on the part of the Marxists and other progressives in which I believe may be found the clue to the present dilemma of the radical movements. This omission is their failure to trace the multiple effects of *economic centralism* on all aspects of social life: union democracy, party organization, political activity prior to the achievement of power, and the maintenance of democratic checks on a growing bureaucracy.

It is my contention that economic centralism leads both to impotency in getting popular backing for progressive parties and to an undemocratic planned economy even if power is somehow obtained. If this contention is correct, it means that the whole tactical emphasis will have to be shifted from political activity of the conventional sort (emphasis only, not all political activity), to the development of an economic program to *reduce* (not eliminate) economic centralism directly without making use of the state

The idea is beginning to take hold among some left-wing individuals that the Socialist platform of "democratic ownership of the means of production" is a contradiction in terms if state ownership is complete. If all economic enterprises are in the hands of the state and every individual is dependent on the state, and the state alone, for his livelihood, it is impossible to check the bureaucracy and to keep the economy democratic. Marx was the first to point out that complete economic dependence was not conducive to political independence; no matter what the legal formalities, final control over policies would sooner or later rest with the bureaucracy through its control over economic life. The legislature cannot long remain dominant when the bureaucracy controls the men who make up the parties and can exercise (unofficial perhaps) discrimination and coercion against political activity through their monopoly of jobs and resources.

For these reasons, the feeling is now becoming current in some quarters that the state should not take over everything. The dilemma comes, however, in the fact that given the heritage of economic centralism and large-scale production left to us by capitalism, the state is *forced* either to take control of most of the economy or to leave some of it in the hands of an undemocratic minority, namely the top-level of capitalists. Because of the com-

plex intertwining and centralism of the modern industrial scene, state control over even only the 120 top corporations would mean sewing up the rest of the economy.

Therefore it is also proposed that, if the state should take over the 120 largest corporations, it should promptly decentralize them. An example of this approach might be the steel industry, where at present a great many products which have no technical need for largescale production or economic centralism are nevertheless either produced by the large corporations, subsidiaries thereof, or by small firms completely dependent on them because of their monopoly of and price control over raw steel. If the government were to take over the production of steel and sell at cost, it would unleash many more small independent firms. This would tend to distribute economic resources a little more evenly throughout the population and help offer an economic base for political independence from the bureaucracy and state.

This solution is a good one, and one which should be applied to all industries in which technology forces large-scale production and indirectly, government operation. However, relying on this method alone is inadequate and dangerous.

First, it should be remembered that during the transition period after the progressive party has come to power and taken over, and before it has decentralized the large corporations, all the dangerous elements apply that hold against any permanent state control of the 120 large corporations mentioned earlier. During the transition period there are no longer effective economic checks. Other checks, mainly those of keeping party leadership responsive to the needs of the rank and file, have to be relied upon. Selecting a good initial personnel and depending on their good wishes is a risky hope. If there is any law of power, it is that those who have overwhelming power are only too apt to abuse it and to retain it, even out of the best intention.

As to party checks: centralism perverts this also, just as it does the democracy of unions and co-operatives. People working in unions or co-operatives in which the economic organization is so vast that it demands overall action, and in which there are few functions for local autonomy are often appalled both by the absence of effective control over its leadership and by the apathy of most of the members. This is only natural since in the first place, the size of the organization demands a great deal of delegation to the leaders to carry on effective work, and in the second place, the individual has no chance at influence unless he first converts an overwhelming number of people to his position, in order to gain representation at the top. The organizational task that faces the individual is so vast that he remains only passive, and soon sinks to apathy. Once in, the leadership is well intrench-

ed just because of this great organizational work needed to dislodge them. Mild dictatorships emerge.

The same thing holds true in political parties (or would if the progressive groups attained any size). British experience is valuable for it indicates the ills we are likely to fall heir to if left-wing parties gain success. The failure of MacDonald, Snowden et al., to remain responsive to their backers cannot be blamed on political immaturity, civil service sabotage, or accidental factors alone. There is no effective short-run control over the leadership of a large party when there is top-heavy delegation, as there has to be when the attack is on overall national policy. The greater the powers delegated to it, the less chance there is of keeping leadership responsive, and the taking over of the 120 largest corporations is a much larger grant of power than held before.

In addition there is the further question, granting that the leadership remains true to its original intentions, of what groups are going to manage the decentralized resources. The only institution already well intrenched on the scene is the capitalist, and there are defects in sharing power solely with even the smaller capitalists. There is the question of how long they would remain small, since the tendency is for an always increasing capital accumulation and a drive towards extending the hierarchy of control. In addition there are unhealthy aspects both in ideology and practice about eternal competition.

Organized groups are a much better solution for the sharing of power, but when the state first takes over, these are absent. Group checks have to be developed out of thin air. The TVA attempted to solve this problem by organizing power-distributing cooperatives, subsidizing them (in collaboration with R. E. A.) to the extent of 90 per cent, to act as a check to its own power. This has thus far been unsuccessful because the people making up the cooperatives haven't really felt the need; they were uneducated as to the value of independent checks—with the result that the checks never functioned adequately. The mass of the people cannot be educated now as to how they are to act at some distant date when Socialist power is achieved; experience is a better teacher. This means that the period of transition to dispersed economic power would be lengthened and perhaps would never have the sparkle and strength which voluntary development would give. The time during which the bureaucracy may get out of hand is thus greatly increased.

One other aspect is important: planning. Planning is desirable, unless it operates completely at a national level. Planning largely monopolized by the federal government reduces freedom and tends to produce apathy, since it reduces the opportunity

for individual influence on the more vital issues in social life. If the state decentralizes economic resources to small capitalists or even to groups built around a complete division of labor, it alone can plan and coordinate.

What is proposed here as an alternative to the political approach of using the state to change the economic forms is a new sort of cooperative economic program built around small-scale production on a semi-selfsufficient basis. A community might produce about half the goods it needs (technology is making this possible—it is the selective force of capitalism which puts into prominence large-scale production and complete division of labor in order to extend the capitalists' hierarchy of control). It would then band together with other localities to control production of goods in industries too big for one, yet not large enough to require federal ownership. It would thus permit a whole network of local and regional planning, and reduce the area necessarily subject to overall national planning.

At the same time political activity to press the state to take over certain large-scale industries would go on, and the development of a social program, schools, and other instruments of influencing public opinion, supported by group resources, could combat the influence of capitalist ideology, making it that much easier to get into power politically. It could show a few immediate gains along the way, whereas political parties like the Socialist have nothing to show but promises. The local autonomy made possible by semi-selfsufficiency would permit participation in control on the part of the individual, and the fact that the delegation of power to national federations is not so all-inclusive would insure greater responsiveness on the part of the leadership.

A most important function would be to cut some of the economic power of the big corporations out from under them. Whittling down the markets of monopoly capitalism, and at the same time developing alternative group-controlled resources, would reduce the social power of big business at the same time that the dangers inherent in the federal taking over of the big firms would be attenuated. The state would have no more economic power than that held by the monopoly capitalists, and since the latter would have been already reduced, the chance for bureaucratic abuse is also lessened.

As to the means and techniques of setting community enterprises on their feet: There are a number of advantages to small-scale production in many industries even privately operated, including lower overhead, for example, and less waste in scrapping capital when newer processes come in. Group enterprise adds several more important advantages: (1) Utilization of labor. In days of mass unemployment, any work whatsoever is better than

none both from the individual and the group standpoint. By group organization and preferential purchasing from within the group, recognition can be made in purchasing of whether it helps employ another man, and a market is assured. Particularly at the beginning, a small-scale enterprise may not be able to compete in ordinary markets at cost (cost computed at prevailing wage rates). But with group organization a ready market is established within the group for this enterprise, with some sold outside at less than cost to get cash for materials. Other members of the group would be required to buy the product even if more expensive than elsewhere; but it is not a hardship since workers of the first enterprise are doing the same for them. This income is better than no income. (2) Lower distribution costs. Production would be close to the market, hence transportation costs for finished products would be low; and because of the requirement that purchases be made within the group, there are no advertising costs. A surprising proportion of cost in capitalist firms goes to advertising; it is also one of the main ways in which monopoly is established and maintained. The choice of the consumer under such a set-up would be more limited than under capitalism in the beginning because of the priority requirement that one buy within the group wherever possible; however the degree of choice afforded by capitalism is much ado about nothing. One need only think of cigarettes in which some 15 brands are offered with no real difference between them.

It might be mentioned in passing that this sort of group economic program is preferable to the conventional co-operative since this plan capitalizes on unutilized labor; and also is not forced to emulate capitalist trade practices and the centralization necessary to compete on their terms.

Of course, particularly at the beginning, the groups would have to buy much of their raw materials and other goods from monopolies, and thus would be open to economic attack. Those enterprises in which such raw materials represented a high proportion of cost would be avoided; however if they constituted only a small proportion, this would not be a handicap. Another possibility in getting away from monopolistic control is to emphasize substitutes and oppose monopolies by that means instead of going into direct competition in their industry. One point of importance is that, politically, monopolies cannot afford *open* warfare; dramatization of it on the part of the groups involved, would tend to bring their evils out in the open and advertise the need for state control, which usually tends to be concealed.

There are many unexplored possibilities in this approach and both because of them and the lack of a good alternative I believe it deserves further study. Partial decentralism (unfortunately

carried to extremes by Borsodi and others) is for the first time compatible with a high standard of living, thanks to modern technology and the new power sources available everywhere. The probable eclipse of the present steel economy by aluminum and plastics further opens the field.

Politically as well as economically it may offer a pleasanter future and in the process give progressives and their followers something concrete to build on besides talk. It would help cure the frustration of the radicals; for its success in a given locality is not dependent upon conversion of the nation or the world.



JAMES BURNHAM'S "THE MACHIAVELLIANS"*

by *William Ferry*

"He would have men prepared to encounter the worst of men: and therefore he resembles him to a man driving a flock of sheep, into a corner, and did there take out their teeth, and instead, gave each of them a set of wolves teeth so that, whereas one shepherd was able to drive a whole flock, now each sheep had need of a particular shepherd, and all little enough."

*The vindication of that hero of political learning, Nicholas Machiavel, by James Boevey. (Quoted in Wyndham Lewis, *The Art Of Being Ruled*).*

The atmosphere, these days, contains a good deal more of what is called 'realism' than is usually considered desirable for healthy progress. In some measure this is a natural symptom of the ebb of insurgent liberal-socialist thought. The prospects of large-scale reform having been largely dissipated in the past two decades, a new starting point, with a more stringent perspective, is sought. The war too is taking its toll, withering at contact all attractive formulations as to its ultimate purpose, so that alternatives are constantly being narrowed between greater evils and slightly lesser ones. The Union for Democratic Action has now progressed to that point where the delineation of the future balance of power in Europe is a prime programmatic concern, while Ely Culbertson's "practical" nonsense is mouthed by leftist politicians—prelude to a new Congress of Vienna. Illusions are discarded, political self-consciousness prevails—or so it seems. But where do political illusions begin, and where end? What is the locus of realism, and what are its lessons?

James Burnham has worked out a cogent argument which has this in its favor: it states in general form the conditions of all effective social

* *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom*, by James Burnham, John Day, \$2.50.

action, rather than being circumscribed within a particular dilemma. That he has been so vigorously denounced by the liberal press indicates that they do not feel at ease within such an inclusive structure, preferring to "stick to the facts". The more sophisticated critics say that problems of power are always specific—which is true; and that there is no general problem of power—which is false and a non-sequitur. What, in another context, might be welcomed as a cautious disavowal of sweeping generalizations, is clearly in this case an unwillingness to discuss the premises of their program. For Burnham deals in "fundamentals", and only those who have given no hostages to the powers—that he can take a hand in such a radical game. (This applies to the Marxian groups too. Here, loyalty to an *a priori* system, the cultivation of which has taken a century of strenuous effort, performs the same role that the political commitments of the past ten years do for the New Dealers.)

The Machiavellians summarizes the relevant writings of Machiavelli, Mosca, Sorel, Michels, and Pareto, and from their points of tangency sets up a theory of political behavior that has provocative implications for current discussion. It is to be feared, however, that the substantial contribution of the book will be neglected because of certain shortcomings in method and tone. They are limitations of a glib, schematic, intemperate intellect, with an inexplicable Marxian bias towards history. To dub the Machiavellians "defenders of freedom" for erecting valid hypotheses concerning social conduct is to give to truth a partisan flavor of which it is innocent: a moral concern must be demonstrated. Even John Calhoun could write, while defending slavocracy: "Power can only be resisted by power,—and tendency by tendency... Those who exercise power and those subject to its exercise,—the rulers and the ruled,—stand in antagonistic relations to each other..." There is a naive positivism at work, and an easy misuse of science, in the sheer contradiction established between blunt truth and dishonest myth, which ignores the symbolic quality of ideals as they find expression in myths. Myths need not lie (though some do), nor are all myths equally meaningful, nor do all myths deceive rather than enlighten. Myth is a mode of expression, not a constituent of that which is expressed. Again, Burnham reduces goals to immediately ascertainable possibilities presented spontaneously by the situation. A more careful statement would recognize that the selection of specific ends is vitally influenced by more distant and less articulate ends, in the absence of which evidence is but brute data.

From an extended analysis of Dante's *De Monarchia** Burnham draws a crucial distinction between the *formal* and *real* meaning of a political philosophy or program. The purpose is to raise to the level of academic thought the dearly-bought insight of ordinary men—that the words of politicians are not to be taken at their face value. The formal is the literal, dictionary meaning; the real meaning, which is the theory in action, is discovered only in the context of social life. Secretary of State Hull, for instance, preaches concord among nations (after the war). When the words are translated into the workings of the State Department they signify American commercial and political dominance in world affairs. Even if this latter were not Mr. Hull's *intent* at all, it is the objective, operational import of his program—for where intent is not translated into effect its existence is conjectural, and, conversely, it is only in overt demeanor that intent can be evaluated. A more obvious case is the Soviet Constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and assembly, and *means* saleable propaganda to the gullible. The British Labor Party has agreed to an electoral truce to insure a united effective struggle against Hitlerism; the *meaning* of this tactic is the presence in the cabinet of labor leaders enforce-

* The following is not a faithful summary but rather my own re-statement, for better or worse.

ing a conservative program in domestic, foreign, and military affairs. The manner in which the formal program distorts and disguises the real program not only inspires self-deception (the opposition is rarely misled), but also renders the real meaning recalcitrant to deliberate control. The Bolshevik theory of the dictatorship of the working-class turned out to *mean* the dictatorship of the central committee, to the surprise and horror of many adherents. By the time the discovery was made the situation had already been determined.

Burnham's handling of this question is such as to invite a speedy objection. He insists that the theories of the Machiavellians are scientific in that the formal and real meanings coincide. That is to say, the literal meaning of their propositions exemplifies the concrete workings of their subject-matter; the world of words does not pervert the world of things. But since his test case—Dante's tract—is a gaudy metaphysical apologia for a self-centered politics, Burnham seems to permit himself the liberty of imputing Dante's motives. At which point his censors are prompt to point to the supposed personal fascistic leanings of Sorel, Mosca, and Pareto, while rejecting their theories as a reactionary cloak. Now it should be evident that to raise such a psychological issue is both unwarranted and undesirable. The relations between men and their words can be amazingly complex, as the social sciences have only recently begun to appreciate in their study of semantics and ideology. Moreover, assertions about motivation are not open to the same rigors of proof as is the case of an inferred meaning constructed by juxtaposing word against fact. Broadly speaking, the hypotheses of say, Michels, are scientific while those of Dante are not, for the same considerations that would apply to conflicting formulas in chemistry and physics: when subject to observation and experiment they fulfill the conditions of true statements.

The distinction between formal and real meaning once having been made, its function in Machiavellian theory becomes clear. The formal anti-theses which set apart different parties are shown to issue from a lowest common denominator—their direction towards the achievement and retention of power. "If our interest is in man as he is on this earth, so far, as we can learn from the facts of history and experience, we must conclude that he has no natural aspiration for peace and harmony, he does not form states in order to achieve an ideally good society, nor does he accept mutual organization to secure maximum social welfare. But men, and groups of men, do, by various means, struggle among themselves for relative increases in power and privilege." (p. 41) This seems to say a good deal about "human nature" and possesses a grand air of "defeatism"; as a result it has been discussed in just such terms. Readers with a more generous and less sectarian vision would have politely segregated this personal emphasis from the impersonal core of the theme, even if such generosity deprived them of an easy target. That history is a "struggle for power" is an elementary, even trite, description; all parties organized for certain ends find it imperative to wield coercive authority. But beyond this commonplace can be noted a more singular trend: power slowly takes priority over the professed goals as an end-in-itself, and the closer to the effective exercise of power one is, the higher is its priority rating. This can be explained in part by the internal consequences of organization noted below; in part by the confidence of participants, especially leaders, in the rightness of the cause for which they have sacrificed so much, which urges them to gloss over "expedient" measures. Any less intransigent attitude would be intolerable to people of such extreme concentration and seriousness. In most cases the party must either hold power, regardless of whether or not its methods contravene the formal program, or abdicate in favor of the hated enemy. When the choice is between power at any price and political suicide,

the answer can be readily imagined; even if this disjunction were fictitious, the heated conflict of extreme viewpoints would lend it an aura of reality. Struggles for principles come to *mean* struggles for power.

It might be well to repeat, motives propose but the exigencies of practical action dispose. It is silly to deny that there are individuals so imbued with disinterested idealism that they are willing to forego the prerogatives of power when these negate the ideals. But it can be safely said: (1) they are few and far between, (2) they repudiate the most potent means of exerting an enduring influence, and (3) when such individuals enter into a group in order to further these ideals, the attributes of the group will not be those of the individual. The history of the Franciscan Order, surely the most ambitious attempt to break through this circle, in its evolution from complete abnegation to ruthless regimentation, is instructive on this score. Illustrative, too, is the experience of the Spanish Anarchists, who, scornful of political power, awoke one day to find themselves burdened with Anarchist ministers in the Republican cabinet. Just as the assumption of "economic man" is not necessary to explain the workings of a price economy, so any concept of "power lust" is extrinsic to the above generalizations. The question is not one of faith or lack of faith in human nature, but of which specific faiths are justified by the way men act in defined situations.

The general laws of organization expounded by Michels are too well known to require elaboration. Burnham puts it succinctly: "Social life cannot dispense with organization. The mechanical, technical, psychological, and cultural conditions of organization require leadership, and guarantee that the leaders rather than the mass shall exercise control." (p. 166) This "iron law of oligarchy" reinforces the pursuit of power-ends at the expense of the formal ends. The life of leadership is one of incessant effort to build the party, with a consequent identification of the interests of the leaders with those of "their" party. Through a process of self-dedication the offices of leadership become synonymous with the highest welfare of the membership, not to speak of humanity, civilization, *et al.* Their retention of control is vindicated as a defense of the traditional faith and an assurance of future victory. A struggle for leadership is, above all, a struggle for power between opposing elites—the 'ins' and the 'outs'. Programmatic differences assume the role of vehicles which represent and sanction the rebellious intent. Even if the conflict were originally incited by an ideological disagreement, the need of articulating these differences would involve a campaign for organizational preeminence whose demands would take precedence.

What is the significance of this disparity between professed and operational aims in politics? Three pertinent implications may be suggested here:

(1) Utopian political doctrines are to be deplored, and not only because of their unattainability; in practice they will have worse effects than those more conservative and cautious. The example which Burnham treats convincingly is the liberal aim of democracy, defined as self-government by the people. While, as an ideal, this is irreproachable, as a dependable, practicable precept it is delusive; the formula today *means* strengthening the trend toward Bonapartism or Caesarism. The suffrage mechanism, which realizes the principle, is fetishized into an efficient guarantor, while the developed techniques of mass control warp elections into plebiscites for the confirmation of despotism. More important, the assumption of a unanimity of interest between the ruler as the representative and the ruled as the represented is grist for the totalitarian mill. The socialist ideal of a "classless society" can be judged similarly defective when one realizes that (a) its formal meaning is so vague and ambiguous that whatever

steps are taken can be subsequently interpreted as consistent with it, (b) this inability to delimit means and procedures provides a convenient cloak for unscrupulous careerists, (c) it is psychologically and historically intertwined with a preference for a completely collectivized society, (d) it supposes that the question of power can be definitively settled, which is as good an excuse as any ruling elite can wish for suppressing dissidents as disruptive and anarchic.

(2) Democracy must be defined in terms like Mosca's "liberty" and "juridical defense". This means a set of impersonal restrictions upon those in power and protection by law and the courts of the familiar democratic rights. It emphasizes government by due process rather than by the unchecked rule of self-titled delegates of History or the Workers, and is summed up in the right of organized opposition and subversion.

(3) But laws and constitutions may easily be violated in practice while respected in speech. Further: "No theory, no promises, no morality, no amount of good will, no religion will restrain power. Neither priests nor soldiers, neither labor leaders nor business men, neither bureaucrats nor feudal lords will differ from each other in the basic use they will seek to make of power... Only power restrains power." (p. 246) Freedom is the product of the conflict of social forces, not of their unity and harmony. (Most socialists would agree that this holds for all societies save a socialist one, whose exceptional status is transcendently assured.) It is only through such freedom that the maximum of self-government is achieved. Opposing elites will make promises to masses in exchange for support, and if victorious must keep some of them. The struggle stimulates the growth of new demands among the non-elite and encourages new pretenders to rise. "The masses, blocked by the iron law of oligarchy from directly and deliberately ruling themselves, are able to limit and control, indirectly, the power of their rulers. The myth of self-government is translated into a measure of reality by the fact of freedom." (p. 248)

There are many, including Burnham, who feel that recognition of these aspects of group action inevitably inhibits socialist activity as we have come to understand it. I feel that this flows from a confusion of perspectives. A general sociological outlook is not relevant in the same degree to *all* problems. Machiavellian theory is an indispensable analytical tool, even on its present abstract and elementary level; but it modifies only in small part traditional revolutionary socialist strategy. The problems posed by a declining capitalism may now appear more intricate and complex, but this should have been expected. The immense significance of Burnham's approach is potential; we can ignore it only at the risk of being disarmed by the future course of events.